

ACTION AF-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	DODE-00	EB-00
	EUR-00	VC-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	L-00	VCE-00
	AC-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OIC-00	OMB-00	PA-00	PM-00
	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00	SS-00	STR-00	TRSE-00
	T-00	IIP-00	PMB-00	PRM-00	DRL-00	G-00	SAS-00
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FM AMEMBASSY ACCRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8340
INFO AMEMBASSY LOME PRIORITY
ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
DIA WASHDC
CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
SECDEF WASHDC
CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ACCRA 000769

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/21/2015
TAGS: [GH](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [TO](#)
SUBJECT: TOGO OPPOSITION LEADER GILCHRIST OLYMPIO'S VIEWS
ON UPCOMING ELECTION

REF: ACCRA 535

Classified By: Polchief Scott Ticknor for reason 1.5 (B/D).

¶1. (C) Summary: On April 20, PolChief met with Togolese opposition leader Gilchrist Olympio in Accra, at PolChief's request. Olympio was optimistic the opposition would win the April 24 election, although he saw the potential for government manipulation of the vote counting. If the opposition wins, they would immediately reach out to the military and move toward a referendum to change the constitution. If they lose, there could be serious violence which opposition leadership would have little ability to control. The military might split. He said Ghanaian troops of Ewe ethnicity might cross the border to help their fellow Ewes. Olympio was dismissive of ECOWAS, discouraged with the European Union, and critical of France. End comment.

Opposition Could Win Elections

¶12. (C) Olympio was concerned about RPT/military efforts to intimidate voters and rig the polls, noting that conditions are not in place for a free and fair election. He underscored the pro-RPT bias of the National Election Commission (CENI) and judiciary and noted government steps to block participation by international observers, observer training, participation by opposition party polling agents, and opposition access to the media.

¶13. (C) Nonetheless, he was optimistic that the opposition would win the most votes in the April 24 election. The opposition is well organized and is taking precautions against manipulation (such as distributing lanterns and satellite phones). He believes the Togolese people are eager for a change and will vote heavily for the opposition. He was impressed by the reception he received in Togo last weekend (it took him over four hours to go from the border to Lome because of the crowds.) In a conversation with Olympio earlier that day, opposition candidate Akitani Bob commented that he was surprised by the strong show of support he found while traveling in northern regions of Togo (and by the fact that soldiers watched his campaigning without interference.) There are no issues in the election aside from a desire for change, he said, adding confidently that Togolese are so fed up with the Eyadema legacy that "even a sheep in a blanket" could win this election.

¶14. (C) While confident that the opposition will win the most votes, he fears the government might manipulate the vote counting to manufacture an RPT victory or take other measures (such as creating a national electricity blackout or ballot stuffing) to rig Sunday's results. A large margin victory for the RPT will be seen as a sure sign of election rigging, he added.

If the Opposition Wins

¶15. (C) Olympio's best case scenario is a substantial

opposition victory with no military backlash followed by a period of political reform. The opposition has already been reaching out to members of the armed forces, who Olympio said have been receptive, and would this outreach would intensify after winning the election. Some military officers are frustrated with the decayed state of the Togolese economy. Others are purely motivated by money and could be willing to support an opposition government. Olympio sees the need for reform in the military, although at this point it would have to be very gradual. If the opposition wins the election, the opposition would also hold a referendum to change the constitution, and reform CENI and the judiciary to remove Eyadema-era practices and cronies. If the opposition wins, there would be no vendetta against Faure Gnassingbe, who Olympio described as "just a kid" who is being manipulated.

16. (C) Olympio said he has not decided whether he would go back to play a political role in an opposition-led Togo or would retire from politics (he claimed he was tired of it). He was also not sure if he would go back to Togo before the election, saying he was consulting with opposition leaders and thought his presence might be more of a hindrance and distraction than a help at this point. He also did not want

to be stuck in Togo if the border is closed for a while.

If Gnassingbe Wins

17. (C) If Faure Gnassingbe wins, there could be "an implosion" of violence, starting as early as the night of April 24. Olympio claimed many of his young supporters in particular would not accept a Gnassingbe victory and have a plan to instigate violence if the opposition loses. They have access to arms and are beyond the control of opposition leadership. He was surprised during his trip to Lome last weekend by the "hundreds" of youthful supporters who surrounded him for protection. When PolChief asked what he and the leadership were doing to prevent violence from within their ranks, Olympio said there was not much he could do when the other side was doing the provoking. He denied that opposition backers had instigated violence last weekend, putting all the blame on the government. It was difficult to predict where post-election violence might occur, although Lome could be particularly violent. He thought the Togo military might split, exacerbating the violence, and that fighting in the country could have a strong ethnic dimension.

International Role

18. (C) Olympio was largely critical of the international role to date. The Ghanaian government was worried about a possible refugee influx but "isn't doing anything about it". He described his March 16 meeting with President Kufuor as merely "pleasantries and photo ops". Olympio thought some ethnic Ewe Ghanaian troops or ex-military might cross the border to help defend their fellow Ewes, if attacked. According to Olympio, the European Union was not interested in playing an active role, deferring to ECOWAS. ECOWAS was "just a group of bankrupt countries". In a meeting three weeks ago, Nigerian President Obasanjo reiterated to Olympio that no other ECOWAS countries had an interest in greater involvement in the Togo crisis. Nigeria and South Africa are the only African countries who could influence the situation, he said. Several European Missions in Accra are sending informal observers to Togo for the election. Olympio was critical of France and said many Togolese intensely dislike France for its support of Eyadema and its role in propping up dictators throughout Africa. He saw no general cause for concern about violence against foreigners, although he conceded that some French and whites mistaken for French could be attacked.

Comment

19. (C) Olympio was surprisingly relaxed and generally upbeat, given political developments in Togo. He was open with his views (and cell phone numbers of key contacts), although he made frequent historical digressions. He appears energetic and in constant touch with opposition leaders in Togo. It was clear that he believes the opposition has a chance of winning the election. It was also apparent that he is doing nothing to actively dissuade a violent backlash if the opposition loses. Unlike in our March 15 meeting (reftel), in which he praised President Bush, this time he made no mention of U.S. influence on the situation.

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